

I'm not sure to what extent Shorewood Park is, or ever was, connected to Shorewood School. This north-Burien elementary school was "quickly built" as a 10-room facility in 1951 on a "minimal site of 7.8 acres" to handle the area's growth. A year later, six rooms were added and, two years after that, six more, needed to house the 655 pupils who were soon enrolled there. (Highline School District Chronicle, p. 39)

Shorewood Elementary opened in September, 1952. There were 10 classes and 11 teachers--one class being held in the hall (!). By 1963 Shorewood was the largest elementary school in the Highline District, with 750 students, 25 regular teachers, 21 classrooms and 4 portables. (White Center Remembers, p. 133)

Today Shorewood Park forms the southern boundary of the Shorewood schoolgrounds. Longtime Shorewood resident Fred Henzi believes that when the ground was leveled to build the school and adjoining playground, the head of the ravine (in which the current park lies) was filled in. This would have been a major project involving "lots of engineering work." The natural drainage was diverted west and under 28th Avenue Southwest. Prior to this time, during severe storms and "gully washers," accumulated stormwater would shoot down the ravine--rushing over a small earthen dam which bisected the park--dumping mud and debris in the cul de sac below (27th Place) and onto Marine View Drive.

Originally the Shorewood Park property was owned by a Mr. Wallace, who resided on Vashon Island. Wallace owned most of the land between 28th S.W. and 119th S.W. and Marine View Drive S.W. He built at least six homes (or sold the lots for them) in this neighborhood. During the 1960s (and perhaps earlier) the Brunner family lived in the home just southwest of the entrance to the Park on 28th S.W. (I attended Shorewood School with Scott Brunner, and spent a lot of time at his house and in the "woods" next to it, which is now Shorewood Park.)

Apparently Mr. Wallace could have developed the Shorewood property as late as the 1970s. He wanted \$50,000 for the property, but there were no takers. Eventually King County purchased the land, turning it into "Highline Neighborhood Park No. 4." It was added to the King County Parks Department's list of active Forward Thrust projects in April, 1971. ("Park near Shorewood added to active projects' report," Highline Times, June 2, 1971)

There was much debate about what to do with the new park. Apparently there was a lot of junk and debris on the property--piles of bricks and whatnot, an old car, wheels (even wagon wheels!)--and the County decided to keep it as an unenclosed park. There was also a small house or cabin on the property, which the County rented out. There was a road of sorts into the park on which one could drive (and turnaround) at least as far as the "dam," and also a small wooden bridge which may have spanned the gully and even connected to 26th Avenue S.W. (Telephone interview with Fred Kenzi, August 10, 2007)

For decades schoolchildren have used Shorewood Park as an outdoor classroom, where they built campfires, learned camp songs and honed their outdoor cooking skills in

preparation for a week at Camp Waskowitz. The high point of these sessions was always the visit by Harry Lemon, "Mr. Conservation," one of the Highline School District's first teachers and an expert on conservation and ecology. (His introduction usually went: "You've all seen a fuzzy peach; well, now you've met a Harry Lemon!") Mr. Lemon helped instill the conservation ethic and a love of the outdoors in the hearts and lives of thousands of Highline District students who attended his classes and Camp Waskowitz.

Mr. Lemon was Highline School District's first naturalist in the Outdoor Education program centered around Camp Waskowitz. After retiring from teaching in 1963, he spent the next 12 years as a resident Outdoor Education staff member. He made frequent trips into the woods--Shorewood Park and other forested places he called "God's Garden"--to teach students an abiding love and reverence for all living things. Using the wooded ravines of Shorewood Park and Camp Waskowitz as a "living laboratory," he taught hundreds of eager, young students to immerse ourselves in the wonders of the natural world. Sitting around a campfire in Shorewood Gully, Mr. Lemon taught us the names (both common and scientific) and uses of dozens of nearby plant and tree species, as well as the importance of preserving these precious natural resources.

Camp Waskowitz, a nationally acclaimed "outdoor classroom" in the Cascade Mountains near North Bend, was acquired by the Highline School District in 1957. (Many Roads, p. 24) More than just a "camp for kids," Waskowitz offered an education in nature, outdoor survival and conservation. Camp Director Bill Weppler said of the whole experience, which typically began for students with "trial runs" in Shorewood Park, that "we want children to gain a protective feeling for nature." ("Waskowitz Not Just Kids Camp," Highline Times?, September, 1973.)

Author's personal recollections: Shorewood Park was one of the routes I would take to get to the house of one of my first friends in the area, Steve Armstrong. Steve lived on Shorewood beach, and the most direct (and least conspicuous, when stealth was required) route to his house was via the trail through Shorewood Park. (It wasn't officially a park then, just a handy patch of woods.) The trail opened into a little draw that led right down to the beach. That was in 1964-1966. It looks pretty much the same today. In 1967 I smoked my first cigarette in those woods, in a little clearing now overgrown with ivy, salal and wild blackberries. I was in 7th grade and trying to be cool. I know it made me dizzy.

Shorewood Park also devoured many a "home run" kickball, which sometimes bounced so far down the gully that it took the hapless outfielders several embarrassing minutes to scramble down the bank and retrieve it, usually much too late. Many of us undoubtedly stole our first kisses in Shorewood Park, although with whom I'll never tell. . . .

Shorewood Park today is classified as a "neighborhood," "open space" and "passive" park by various use descriptions and plans. It is mostly wooded with large trees and sloping topography. A path in the park connects 28th Avenue S.W. to Shorewood Elementary School. (Salmon Creek Neighborhood Plan, Oct. 2004, p. 20) A branch of the path drops to the south, toward Puget Sound--perhaps the remains of an old skid road, where logs

were dragged down to the nearby shore to be rafted to Seattle mills. A couple of large logs, all but consumed by mushrooms and returned to earth, lie by the side of the trail--a mossy tribute to days gone by.

The northernmost of Burien's parks, Shorewood Park lies in a quiet, wooded depression bordering the noisy playgrounds of Shorewood School. Alas, in July 2007, 55-year-old Shorewood School was demolished. The new school is scheduled to open in September, 2008. Luckily the park itself will not be greatly affected by the construction.

In recent years, longtime Shorewood resident Ted Daley and others have spearheaded efforts to free Shorewood Park of invasive plants and build steps along the path. Other neighbors take part in these "ivy pulls" and cleanup parties. ([Shorewoodonthesound.org](http://Shorewoodonthesound.org) website) Stairs were recently installed where the dam is (or was); and once a month volunteers spend two hours ridding the park of ivy and other invasive plants.